with the way in which the sudden rise in prices at the very outset of the Fourth Stage Works was foreseen and averted. On the whole it may be expected that notwithstanding the rise in prices the total expenditure on the Fourth Stage Works will not be much in excess of what was anticipated at the time of the preparation of the estimates. As I explained in an earlier speech last year our total commitments for the Fourth Stage Works by way of advances to the Harbour Authorities is about Rs. 75 lakhs inclusive of the cost of the new dredging plant. Towards this commitment we have so far paid Rs. 33·80 lakhs.

7. In addition to the works undertaken by the Harbour Authorities the Fourth Stage Works of the Harbour involves the diversion and extension of the railway line to the Willingdon Island. The South Indian Railway Company have been entrusted with this construction and the work is already taken on hand. This work is estimated to cost approximately Rs. 12·50 lakhs. A special staff has been appointed for acquiring the necessary lands for the railway extension. According to the arrangements now made, the harbour terminal station at the Willingdon Island would become the terminus for all passenger trains and there would be two new passenger stations at Ernakulam, one at the north of the town, and the other at the southern end. The existing railway station at Ernakulam is intended to be used purely as a goods station for local goods traffic. That portion of the railway which is within the port limits will be constructed at the expense of the Harbour Authorities. Arrangements have been made with the South Indian Railway Company for working the entire extension as part of the Shoranur—Ernakulam railway system.

Communications.

8. Though with the extension of the railway line to the harbour the fullest facilities will be available for the handling of traffic, a great deal remains yet to be done in completing the railway connections to open up the hinterland of the Harbour. The opening up of communications with the hinterland by means of railways and roads is one of the necessary corollaries of building up a port. With the decision to construct the Cochin Port as a first class port, the Governments concerned are automatically committed to the policy of providing means of communication to the interior. The magnificent waterway that lies along the entire coastline provides a natural means of communication which is unrivalled from the point of view of economic transport. So far as the areas served by the backwater are concerned there is not very much more to be

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done. But a great deal still remains to be done by way of railway and road connections for other parts of the interior. It is expected that practically the whole of the Indian Peninsula to the south of Madras would have to use the Cochin Harbour for its trade. The absence of a few railway connections on the railway system in the Peninsula is keenly felt as a handicap against the natural flow of trade to and from the Cochin Harbour. The Trichur—Kollengode connection is one such gap that will have to be filled up very soon. Another gap is the one between Chamarajanagar in the Mysore State and Mettupalayam. When this railway connection is made the trade of the entire Mysore territory will have to pass through the Cochin port. It is gratifying to note that the Mysore Government have taken up this railway extension with enthusiasm and earnestness. Vested interests have to some extent thrown obstacles in the way of these natural and inevitable developments. Rational schemes of railway extensions of this nature are also held up on the plea that they would "short-circuit" an existing system. Every new facility in railway transport must necessarily short-circuit certain systems. The very object of providing facilities through railway communication is to narrow down the barriers of distance. If certain railway authorities had their own way, they would like to carry goods and passengers between two points through the longest possible route. Whether such a policy is good from the interest of railway revenues or not, it is certainly detrimental to the economic development of the country. I hope that the Government of India will realise that, as one of the partners in the construction of the Cochin Port, they are committed to a policy of increasing the railway facilities in the hinterland of the harbour and help the Mysore and the Cochin Governments in filling up these two gaps at the earliest possible moment.

9. On our part, we are doing all that lies in our power in the matter of providing easy communications. Though the Anamallai Hills are on the border of our State, the trade of the plantation area on these hills has now to take a long and circuitous route for want of a through and direct means of communication with the harbour. A road from Chalakkudi to the Anamallai Hills would supply this lacuna. The distance will be about 50 miles. A special staff was appointed by us to make a preliminary survey and an estimate of the cost of constructing this road. The survey has now been completed and the preliminary estimates have been prepared. As this new road will have to depend for its maintenance on the trade of the plantation

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area on the Anamallais for some years to come, negotiations are proceeding with the Planters' Association with a view to come to some settlement which will make this road scheme feasible. If a satisfactory settlement is arrived at, it is proposed to start the construction of this road next year and finish it within three years.

Trade of the Port.

10. In view of our great financial interest in the harbour, Honourable Members would be interested to know something about the progress of the trade of the port. The total number of steam ships that have entered the port during the 3 years ending with 1936—37 is on an average about 770 ships per year. The total export from the port averages about 1,37,000 tons. The total imports during 1934—35 were 6,70,000 tons and in 1935—36 it rose up to 7,29,000 tons. In 1936—37, the imports fell down to 6,03,000 tons. The fall in the import tonnage during this year need not however cause serious alarm as it was almost entirely due to the drop in the import of grains due to the rice market having been in an over-stocked position in the previous year. The customs revenue collected in 1934—35 was over Rs. 54 lakhs, and in 1935—36, over Rs. 55,81,000. The receipts under the Landing and Shipping dues averages about Rs. 8 lakhs per year. It will thus be seen that the volume of trade in the port has remained fairly steady during the last 3 years notwithstanding certain adverse factors. It can be confidently expected that with the provision of greater facilities, the trade would expand considerably.

11. One other matter connected with the customs revenue would be of interest to Honourable Members. Our share of the customs revenue has hitherto been paid to us by the Government of India only after the final accounts of the Government of India for a financial year are closed. Though the financial year of the Government of India ends on the 31st March we used to get our share of the customs revenue only in September and sometimes even later. We made a request to the Government of India that approximately 90 per cent of our share may be paid to us as soon as the preliminary figures are available to the Government and that the balance may be paid when the final accounts of the year are closed. The Government of India have very kindly agreed to this proposal. The net result of this transaction will be that we would gain about Rs. 15,000 to Rs. 20,000 yer year by way of interest charges.

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